



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Animal and
Plant Health
Inspection
Service

FY 2006

WILDLIFE SERVICES—VERMONT

Contact Information:

John McConnell, Vermont Wildlife Services State Director

59 Chenell Drive, Suite 7, Concord, NH 03301-8548

Phone: (603) 223-6832 FAX: (603) 229-1951

E-mail: John.E.Mcconnell@aphis.usda.gov

Web Site: www.ws.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage

USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Vermont

Every day residents, industries, and agencies call on Vermont Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from wildlife damage or threats. Vermont's relatively small size and continued population growth lead to frequent contact between people and wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective and humane strategies to resolve conflicts.

Vermont WS' program reflects the State's diverse wildlife. It works to protect people, pets, and livestock from wildlife-borne diseases; guards many natural resources from colonial water bird damage; reduces losses by game animals; and educates the public about wildlife and wildlife damage management. The program also protects property, agriculture and reduces human health and safety risks at airports, public buildings, and on State and private lands.



Specific projects conducted by Vermont WS include protecting natural resources from double-crested cormorant damage, protecting threatened Eastern Spiny Softshell turtles from predation, surveillance for rabies and preventing its northward expansion; wildlife disease surveillance; reducing wildlife hazards at State operated airports; and managing damage caused by gulls, pigeons, starlings, and other wildlife.

Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

Wildlife Services enables people to resolve wildlife conflicts by providing sound technical advice and the loan of damage management equipment and materials. When more complex conflicts require specialized expertise, WS may refer customers to the appropriate public or private source of assistance or conduct site visits and provide *direct assistance* in order to resolve problems. To support these efforts, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop solutions to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure that WS and others benefit from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agricultural Resources—WS assists dairy producers in addressing problems associated with large concentrations of European starlings and other birds. Damage occurs as birds consume and contaminate feed, which degrades feed quality, reduces milk production and may be responsible for salmonella. The program, coordinated with the VT Division of Pesticide Control, is comprised of technical assistance, recommendations for exclusion, modification of cultural practices and population management.

Protecting Health and Safety by Wildlife

Disease Management—In Vermont, 64 positives resulted from the approximately 435 animals submitted for rabies testing in 2006. Positive cases were confirmed in all five rabies vector species: raccoons, skunks, red fox, woodchucks, and bats. In response to rabies threats and other problem wildlife, WS has operated a State and Federally funded toll-free Rabies Information and Referral Service (hotline) for 15 consecutive years. The Hotline, staffed seven days a week by WS biologists, responded to more than 2,000 requests for assistance in 2006 and provides State residents and visitors with accurate, consistent information

Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Wildlife disease (rabies, AI and CWD) management and surveillance
- Staffing a seven-day a week Rabies Information and Referral Service (Hotline)
- Protecting natural resources and property from double-crested cormorant damage
- Reducing on and off-site safety hazards and property damage at landfills
- Protecting civil and military aviation from wildlife strikes

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Vermont:

- Managing wildlife transmission of rabies
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing double-crested cormorants to protect natural resources and private property
- Managing threats to human health and safety and property caused by pigeons and starlings
- Defining and reducing agricultural losses to turkey, deer, and bear

and recommendations regarding rabies and other wildlife conflicts.

To prevent the northward spread of raccoon rabies, WS cooperated for the tenth consecutive year to distribute over 380,000 baits containing oral rabies vaccine (ORV) in more than 2,000 square miles of northern Vermont. To date, more than 2.4 million vaccine-laden baits have been distributed. Over 300 biological samples were collected from raccoons and skunks in the ORV zone in 2006 to determine bait uptake, program effectiveness and monitor rabies movements.

To detect highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza, the national Wildlife Services program led a multi-agency effort to collect samples from migratory and wild birds and the environment. Vermont WS collected more than 1,000 wild captured and hunter harvested birds and nearly 1,000 fecal samples from the environment; all were negative for the H5N1 strain.

In 2006, WS continued monitoring and sampling activities for chronic wasting disease (CWD) as a component of National and State programs. The presence of CWD in wild cervid populations would present significant challenges to wildlife agencies because of the impacts on the population itself, as well as perceptions regarding public health. WS assisted with sampling of more than 300 deer heads collected from meat processors throughout the state.

Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports—Bird strikes to airplanes cost the Nation's civil aviation over \$550 million annually and pose a significant safety hazard. WS is recognized for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the industry both nationally and in Vermont. WS' National Wildlife Research Center conducts research to develop methods to reduce hazards to aviation and maintains a national strike database used to monitor trends and species of greatest concern to aviation.

WS conducted bird harassment and hazard assessments at one State airport in conjunction with integrated gull harassment activities at a nearby

landfill. Less than 5,000 feet separate the facilities, which serve as loafing and feeding areas for gulls. WS' integrated harassment and monitoring program has reduced gull presence at this airport by over 70% .

WS completed an FAA-required wildlife hazard assessment at one certificated, State-operated airport to define the species using the airport. This assessment serves as the foundation for developing a wildlife management plan to protect public and aviation safety. WS continues to provide consultations, direct assistance, assessments, and training for the 10 State-managed airports and assists airports in acquiring Federal and State permits that allow designated personnel to immediately address bird and mammal hazards.

Protecting Natural Resources on Lake Champlain's State Managed Islands—To reduce cormorant damage to natural resources, restore colonial water bird diversity, and promote habitat recovery, WS cooperated with Vermont Fish and Wildlife in double-crested cormorant (DCCO) control activities on Lake Champlain in 2006. Zero reproduction and population reduction goals for State-owned Young Island were met. Habitat recovery efforts for the Island included soil preparation, plantings and ring-billed gull control activities. Four roosts were dispersed to prevent habitation on other islands. Young Island habitat recovery and increased waterbird diversity were documented with the confirmation of five Black-crowned Night-Heron (BCNH) nests, a first since 1998.

WS completed a cooperative two-year research project using transmitters and satellite telemetry to evaluate DCCO response to management, movement patterns, population and subsequent-year nest site philopatry. Preliminary findings suggest that within a particular year, management can effectively limit recruitment of DCCO at a nesting colony without changing the large-scale Lake Champlain nesting and colonization patterns.

Protecting Threatened or Endangered Species—To enhance recovery of the State-threatened Eastern Spiny Softshell turtle, WS conducted predator (raccoon, skunk and fox) trapping activities at three separate recovery sites adjacent to Lake Champlain in 2006. WS removed more than 70 known nest predators. WS also installed temporary electric fences and trail-timer cameras, and conducted habitat modification to further reduce nest predation.

Protecting Property From Pigeon Damage—WS provided technical and direct control assistance at eight separate facilities to reduce pigeon damage to State-managed buildings in 2006. Roosting and loafing pigeons are responsible for

the accumulation of unacceptable levels of guano, which can damage property and pose threats to human health and safety.

Addressing Damage From Canada Geese—An estimated 10,000 resident Canada geese make Vermont their home. Although most people enjoy observing geese, conflicts often develop as feces accumulate, overgrazing damages landscaping and aggressive geese attack humans. WS assists over 100 state residents and businesses annually with technical advice, equipment, and local population reduction.

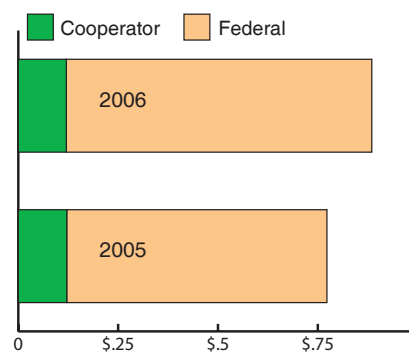
Looking to the Future

WS strives to provide Vermont's citizens and visitors with safe, effective solutions to diverse wildlife conflicts. It works with dairy farmers to develop and implement effective integrated strategies to reduce animal feed consumption, contamination, and health issues caused by birds at Vermont dairies. Wildlife diseases such as rabies, avian influenza, and CWD, represent emerging challenges that must be addressed locally and nationally. In addition, increasing populations of geese, cormorants and gulls pose problems for property and natural resources.

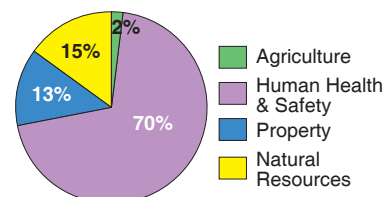
Vermont Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: producers, private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies.

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



USDA is an equal employment provider and employer.

Major Cooperators

- Vermont Departments of Fish and Wildlife, Health, Building and General Services;
- Vermont Agencies of Agriculture and Transportation
- State (UVM) and private universities
- New England Waste Services
- Burlington International Airport; State Airports
- US Fish and Wildlife Service
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Province of Quebec